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NEWS: Opinion

Pipeline bill poses problems

Monday, June 20, 2005 2:28 PM EDT

The Michigan Senate believes that private utilities know better than local government when it comes to protecting the citizenry from pipeline leaks and disasters.

The Senate must also feel that corporations ought to be in charge of local planning and zoning.

The state Senate recently approved legislation that would allow pipelines and utility lines to be built near highways without the consent of local governments, opening the door for a stalled gasoline pipeline in the Lansing area.

The Senate voted 29-9 to send the bill to the House, despite objections from some lawmakers who said local communities would lose their say over contentious construction projects. The bill would let utilities install utility lines, pipelines and other structures within highway rights of way without the approval of a local city, village or township.

The legislation immediately affects Lansing because its leaders have fought a proposal to install a 12-inch underground gas pipeline along Interstate 96, arguing any leaks could endanger the city's water supply and residents' safety. But the bill also has long-term implications for utilities and local governments across Michigan.

We find this legislation simply pandering to utility special interests - a Houston, Texas-based company at that.

Wolverine Pipe Line
Co. wants to build a

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